

that infectious diseases and novel organisms can spread extremely rapidly and respect no boundaries.

With these disturbing realities in mind, we declare our support for the following:

1. We support the right of European countries to continue rejecting new GE crop varieties, and affirm the right of all peoples to take necessary precautionary measures to protect their health and the environment;

2. We condemn the U.S. intervention at the level of the WTO to try to force the lifting of the de facto European moratorium;

3. We pledge to intervene in all appropriate international forums to condemn the US/WTO action, and affirm the right of all peoples to adopt precautionary measures similar to those that have been implemented in Europe;

4. We support the people from across the U.S. and around the world who will be gathering in Sacramento, California at the end of June to expose the USDA sponsored meeting of agriculture and trade ministers, a meeting designed to promote the U.S. agribusiness and biotechnology agenda prior to the upcoming WTO Ministerial in Cancun, Mexico;

5. We demand a full, independent assessment of the actual performance of GE crops to date, as well as the full range of hazards of genetic engineering for human health and all of life on earth;

6. We demand that the commercial developers of hazardous chemicals and genetic engineering technologies be held fully liable for the legacy of toxic and biological contamination that they have created;

7. We support a strengthening of the international Biological Weapons Convention,

whose full implementation has been systematically undermined by the U.S. administration's resistance, and demand a regime of open international inspection of all facilities engaged in research using pathogenic organisms and their DNA;

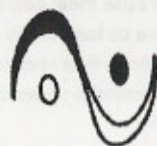
8. We call for an end to the terror tactics of the biotechnology industry and its supporters, including legal assaults on farmers, campaigns to discredit dissenting scientists, and incitement of police to attack and harass those who exercise their democratic rights of free speech;

9. We urge an end to the continuing waste of public funds to support the research agendas of the biotechnology industry, and instead pledge to devote our resources to the furtherance of safe, ecologically sound alternatives in both agriculture and health care, alternatives that merge the best of traditional knowledge and systematic, independent scientific investigation.

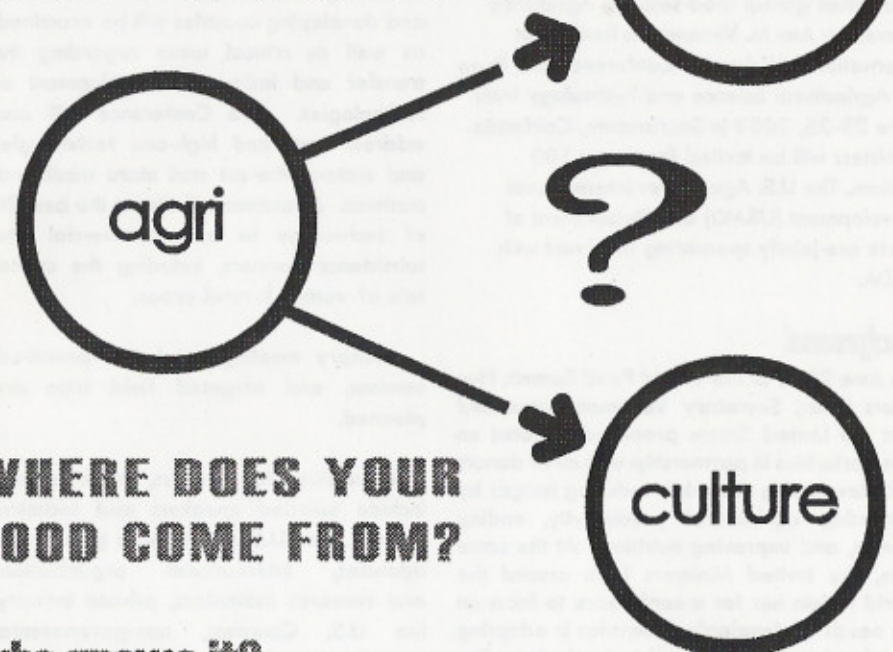
Most of the information herein is from the following websites:

*Food First (www.foodfirst.org),
The Institute for Social Ecology
(www.social-ecology.org),
The Pesticide Action network
(www.panna.org),
& The Union of Concerned Scientists
(www.ucsusa.org)*

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WHAT'S IN YOUR FOOD?



WHERE DOES YOUR FOOD COME FROM?

who grows it?

who picks it?

who owns it?

who regulates it?

who controls it?

THE ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS
WILL BE DECIDED BY A GROUP OF
PEOPLE YOU DIDN'T VOTE FOR IN A
MEETING IN

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA
JUNE 23RD - 25TH.

THE FOLLOWING IS A RESOURCE GUIDE
OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE
MEETING, THE ISSUES AT STAKE AND
THE MOBILIZATION STRATEGIES
CURRENTLY IN PROCESS.

CONTENTS:

Overview.....	what where why who.....	1
Motive.....	reasons to mobilize, educate, and organize.....	2
the Facts.....	about industrial agriculture in the U.S. are these.....	4
Notes.....	sources for the information in the facts section.....	7
Message.....	talking Points Compiled by the Institute for Social Ecology (ISE).....	9
Glossary.....	definitions of the two most controversial terms in agribusiness.....	11
Statement.....	global citizen's declaration for biosafety and food security.....	13

overview.

what where why who.

What is it?

In support of the U.S. commitment to strengthen global food security, Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman is hosting an International Ministerial Conference and Expo on Agricultural Science and Technology from June 23-25, 2003 in Sacramento, California. Ministers will be invited from over 180 nations. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and Department of State are jointly sponsoring the event with USDA.

Background.

In June 2002 at the World Food Summit: Five Years Later, Secretary Veneman announced that the United States proposed to focus on three priorities in partnership with other donors and developing countries: reducing hunger by increasing agricultural productivity, ending famine, and improving nutrition. At the same time, she invited Ministers from around the world to join her for a conference to focus on the needs of developing countries in adopting new food and agricultural technologies. The three priorities were also addressed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. As follow up, at the 2nd Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum in January 2003, USDA and USAID will lead a session on "Increasing Agricultural Productivity and Markets through Science and Technology."

The Conference and Expo will focus on the critical role science and technology (S&T) can play in raising agricultural productivity in developing countries in an environmentally sustainable way.

Agricultural Conference.

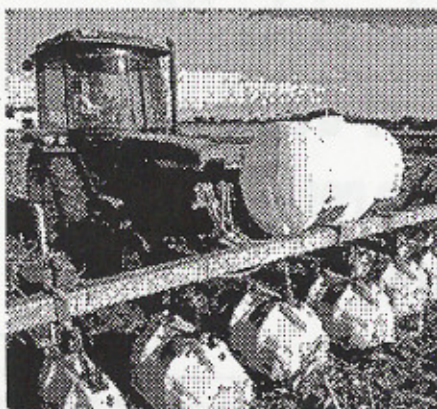
The Conference aims to broaden participants' knowledge and understanding of relevant S&T, including biotechnology, and enhance access to new technologies through

public-private partnerships. Increasing agricultural productivity through technology adoption is a key means of boosting both food availability and access and improving nutrition.

Agricultural production, processing and marketing technologies from developed and developing countries will be examined, as well as critical issues regarding the transfer and indigenous development of technologies. The Conference will also address low- and high-cost technologies and state-of-the-art and more traditional methods. Attendees will discuss the benefits of technology to both commercial and subsistence farmers, including the critical role of women in rural areas.

Plenary meetings, technical break-out sessions, and targeted field trips are planned.

In addition to Ministers, the event will include selected speakers and technical experts from U.S. and foreign government agencies, international organizations and research institutions, private industry, the U.S. Congress, non-governmental organizations, universities and state-level departments of agriculture.



A tractor with hooded sprayers treats a field with carefully-directed herbicide. Herbicide is a major component of "Precision farming".
Photo Courtesy USDA.

entire European Union, have taken steps to restrict the growing and importation of GE crops, and require labeling of all foods with genetically engineered ingredients.

Promises that genetic engineering will feed the world, reduce chemical use, and benefit farmers have proven entirely false. Countries in the global South that have experimented with GE crops have found their introduction to be a dismal failure, as illustrated by the complete failure of Bt cotton crops in several locations in India last year. Now is a time to thoroughly revisit this technology and fully assess its real consequences for our health, the environment, and social equity around the world.

Instead, the U.S. administration has proceeded to initiate a suit at the level of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to pressure the European Union to lift its five-year de facto moratorium on new GE food varieties and strict limits on imports of GE products. Once again, US-based agribusiness companies, the biotechnology industry, and their political allies in Washington are seeking to force this unsafe, untested and inherently hazardous technology on the peoples of the world.

The biotechnology industry and its allies would compel us to overlook the hazard of new allergens and spreading antibiotic resistance, of likely system and digestive system damage, of contamination of neighboring crops and their wild relatives, of known harm to beneficial organisms in the environment, and of new combinations of genetic traits wreaking unforeseen and largely unexamined ecological disruptions. They want us to forget how they have terrorized farmers with lawsuits, threats and surveillance, and how farmers in the global South are suffering from dependencies on unaffordable chemical fertilizers and pesticides that GE varieties would only increase their dependence upon. They would have us look aside while they impose patent regimes that reduce everything alive to commercial products that exist only to be

bought, sold, and traded in a captive global marketplace.

We declare our support for the right of European countries to continue protecting the health of their people and their environments by continuing to refuse these hazardous products. We also assert the fundamental right of people in the United States, where more than three quarters of the world's GE crops are grown, to join others around the world in their rejection of this technology. Monsanto and other biotechnology companies have opposed all steps toward labeling GE food and seeds at the federal and state levels and undermined the work of every independent scientist who questions genetic engineering. We have now learned that Monsanto is spending \$10 million a year to sustain its program of harassment and lawsuits against U.S. and Canadian farmers.

Further, during the 2003 Biodevastation gathering in St. Louis, we have seen the local police in Monsanto's hometown of St. Louis subject peaceful protestors, bicyclists and traveling performers to an unprecedented level of harassment, with paramilitary-style raids on activists' homes and offices and at least 30 "pre-emptive" arrests. This affirms what we have known for a long time—that the biotechnology industry can only have its way in a climate of suppressed public debate, political corruption and intimidation. The more people learn about the hazards of genetic engineering, the more they oppose it; therefore genetically engineered agriculture has become incompatible with democracy itself.

As people around the world continue to reject genetically engineered food and crops, and the market value of companies like Monsanto continues to decline precipitously, biotechnology is being given a new lease on life through ever-more dangerous new applications. Corn and other food crops are being genetically engineered to produce pharmaceutical proteins and, in the name of "fighting terrorism," we are seeing an unprecedented expansion of biological warfare research in the United States. This at a time when the rapid spread of AIDS, and now SARS, reminds the world

humans to replace or supplement defective genes. Where engineering is intended to cure disease, it is called gene therapy. Potential applications that are not related to disease, such as the modification of traits like height, are sometimes called genetic enhancement. Currently, most genetic engineering of humans is done on nonreproductive or somatic cells, like those from bone marrow. The effects of this somatic cell gene therapy are confined to the treated individual. By contrast, germ line gene therapy would modify reproductive cells, so that the modification could be passed on to future generations.

What Is Genetic Engineering? Genetic engineering refers to a set of technologies that are being used to change the genetic makeup of cells and move genes across species boundaries to produce novel organisms. The techniques involve highly sophisticated manipulations of genetic material and other biologically important chemicals.

Genes are the chemical blueprints that determine an organism's traits. Moving genes from one organism to another transfers those traits. Through genetic engineering, organisms are given new combinations of genes -- and therefore new combinations of traits -- that do not occur in nature and, indeed, cannot be developed by natural means. Such an artificial technology is radically different from traditional plant and animal breeding.

Novel organisms Nature can produce organisms with new gene combinations through sexual reproduction. A brown cow bred to a yellow cow may produce a calf of a completely new color. But reproductive mechanisms limit the number of new combinations. Cows must breed with other cows (or very near relatives). A breeder who wants a purple cow would be able to breed toward one only if the necessary purple genes were available somewhere in a cow or a near relative to cows. A genetic engineer has no such restriction. If purple genes are available anywhere in nature -- in a sea urchin or an iris -- those genes could be used in attempts to produce purple cows. This unprecedented

ability to shuffle genes means that genetic engineers can concoct gene combinations that would never be found in nature.

New risks Contrary to the arguments made by some proponents, genetic engineering is far from being a minor extension of existing breeding technologies. It is a radically new technology for altering the traits of living organisms by inserting genetic material that has been manipulated by artificial means. Because of this, genetic engineering may one day encompass the routine addition of novel genes that have been wholly synthesized in the laboratory.

Novel organisms bring novel risks, however, as well as the desired benefits. These risks must be carefully assessed to make sure that all effects -- both desired and unintended -- are benign. UCS advocates caution, examination of alternatives, and careful case-by-case evaluation of genetic engineering applications within an overall framework that seeks to move agricultural systems of food production toward sustainability.

statement.

A Global Citizen's Declaration for Biosafety and Food Security:

U.S. and International Citizens Oppose the U.S./WTO Intervention Against European Controls on Genetically Modified Foods.

Issued and ratified at the 7th International grassroots gathering on Biodevastation, St. Louis, Missouri, USA, May 16-18, 2003
(www.biodev.org)

Seven years after the first commercial introduction of genetically engineered (GE) foods, most people around the world still firmly reject this technology. Only four countries are growing nearly all of the world's genetically engineered crops, and only four basic GE crops (corn, soy, cotton and canola) are being grown commercially on a large scale. More than 135 countries around the world, including the

Technology Expo.

The Technology Expo will run concurrently with the Conference. The Expo will allow companies from developed and developing countries to display and demonstrate products and services with applications in all segments of the food chain, giving participants opportunities for hands-on experience.

The Conference and Expo will highlight an array of technologies, including those related to:

- Soil and water management
- Crop and livestock biotechnology
- Precision agriculture
- Alternative agricultural production
- Environmental protection
- Risk management
- Food processing and packaging
- Agricultural transportation, distribution and marketing
- Agricultural information
- Food safety.

The Conference and EXPO will be held at the Convention Center in Sacramento, California, and attendance is by invitation only. Because of space limitations at the Convention Center, the number of persons accompanying each Minister must be limited to two.

Personnel at U.S. embassies will contact invited delegates individually and offer registration assistance. Each delegate will need to register through the embassy prior to his or her arrival at the Conference.

For more information, please visit the Conference web page at:

www.fas.usda.gov/icd/stconf/conf_main.html

or contact Conference organizers directly at:

STConference.International@usda.gov.

motive.

reasons to mobilize,
educate and organize

Provided by: Food First

Small numbers in parenthesis correspond with notes section following on this section.

What's going on? In June 2002 at the World Food Summit in Rome, the U.S. Secretary of State for Agriculture, Ann Veneman, announced that the United States proposed to focus on three priorities in partnership with other donors and developing countries: reducing hunger by increasing agricultural productivity, ending famine, and improving nutrition. This has been followed up by a conference that will focus on the needs of developing countries in adopting new food and agricultural technologies, to be held in Sacramento, California, between June 23 -25, 2003. It has been convened by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the State Department. Ministers from over 180 countries have been invited. The Ministerial conference runs in tandem with an agricultural technology expo, at which companies will display and demonstrate products and services with applications in all segments of the food chain. (1)

No, but what's really going on? Although the Ministerial was promised as a forum for the discussion of biotechnology, the U.S. government and agribusinesses have left no space in the proceedings for debate or dissent. Instead, the ministerial is a closed session, a space for the U.S. administration, ministers and businesses alone, to push their agendas and products onto the third world.

What's so bad about that?

The world's poorest people live in rural areas, and work in agriculture. They want to grow safe, nutritious food, and to support their families and communities. Industrial

agriculture has been proved, time and again, to be less efficient, less economically sound, and more ecologically and socially destructive than 'traditional' agriculture. Abundance, not scarcity, best describes the world's food supply. Enough wheat, rice and other grains are produced to provide every human being with 3,500 calories a day. Even most "hungry countries" have enough food for all their people right now. Many are net exporters of food and other agricultural products (2). The key issue is not production of food, but distribution. Yet the U.S. government is keen to push industrial agriculture as a solution to hunger, because large U.S. corporations stand to make millions of dollars by controlling access to seed, markets, and knowledge.

It has, in fact, gone about forcing the products down the throats of people in the third world in a variety of ways. Last year, at the height of the famine in Southern Africa, the U.S. pushed genetically modified food onto famine afflicted countries (3). This was a continuation of its policy of 'beggars can't be choosers' — a quote from a USAID official on hearing that India had also refused GM food (4).

The forcing of GM food onto the third world has recently taken a new twist. An HIV/AIDS bill currently before the Senate, authored by Senator Bill Frist, contains the suggestion that HIV/AIDS medication be withheld from African countries if they refuse to accept GM food. This demonstrates a disregard for state sovereignty and the international law enshrined in the UN Biosafety protocol (5).

While some international institutions are inconvenient to the U.S. biotechnology push, others are proving useful. The U.S. is currently taking the European Union to court at the World Trade Organization for its moratorium on GM food on behalf of agricultural corporations such as Monsanto and Aventis. The U.S. government claims that the moratorium is illegal, although there is ample democratic support for it within the EU.

Analysts have suggested that a target just as important as the EU in this dispute is the third world (6). Third world markets offer an abundant resource for corporations, as well as a tactical advantage in isolating citizens in the EU in their demands for safe and nutritious food.

The United States Trade Representative, Robert Zoellick will be at the Sacramento conference together with his chief agricultural negotiator Allen Johnson. They too are looking to expand the role of industrial agriculture in the third world. The WTO is holding a Ministerial meeting in Cancun in September 2003, and agricultural negotiations are deadlocked in Geneva. In tandem with the U.S. government's other moves, pressure will be applied on agriculture ministers to toe the U.S. line in these negotiations, thus providing increased market access for U.S. industrial agricultural exports in the Global South.

The U.S. government moves have been met with a chorus of disapproval. The International peasant federation, Via Campesina, has called on governments worldwide to boycott the ministerial (7). In order to wriggle out of the democratic demands of the world's farmers, the U.S. government and agribusiness has launched a massive public relations campaign. The build-up to the ministerial has already been marked by a standard trio moves: green washing—'biotech will create a world free of pesticides,' poorwashing—'we must accept genetically engineered foods if we are to feed the poor in the third world,' and hope dashing—'there are no alternatives.' These assertions are myths — the truth is both disturbing, but also hopeful, for the reality of agribusiness demonstrates that there is both a necessity for, and every possibility of, sustainable agriculture for all.

be found technologies that are genetic -- that involve modifications of traits passed down from one generation to the next -- and technologies that are not.

Although there are interesting issues connected with a number of biotechnologies -- both old and new -- most of UCS's work focuses on genetic engineering, a new genetic biotechnology.

Traditional Biotechnologies A prime example of traditional genetic biotechnologies is selective breeding of plants and animals. The rudiments of selecting plants and animals with desirable traits and breeding them under controlled conditions probably go back to the dawn of civilization, but the expansion of knowledge about genetics and biology in this century has developed selective breeding into a powerful and sophisticated technology. New molecular approaches like marker-assisted breeding (which enhances traditional breeding through knowledge of which cultivars or breeds carry which trait) promise to enhance these approaches even further.

Traditional breeding technologies have been immensely successful, and indeed are largely responsible for the high yields associated with contemporary agriculture. These technologies should not be considered passé or out of date. For multigenic traits like intrinsic yield and drought resistance, they surpass genetic engineering. This is because selective breeding operates on whole organisms -- complete sets of coordinated genes -- while genetic engineering is restricted to three or four gene transfers with little control over where the new genes are inserted. For the most important agronomic traits, traditional breeding remains the technology of choice.

Other traditional nongenetic biotechnologies include the fermentation of microorganisms to produce wine, beer, and cheese. Industry also uses microorganisms to produce various products such as

enzymes for use in laundry detergents. In an effort to find microorganisms that produce large amounts of enzymes, scientists sometimes treat a batch of organisms with radiation or chemicals to randomly produce genetic alternations. The process, called mutagenesis, produces numerous genetic changes in the bacteria, among which might be a few that produce more of the desired product.

New Biotechnologies Many new biotechnologies do not involve modifications of traits passed on to the next generation. A good example is monoclonal antibodies (highly specific preparations of antibodies that bind to a single site on a protein), which have many diagnostic applications, including home pregnancy testing kits. Many biotechnology companies are engaged in these sophisticated, but noncontroversial, technologies.

By contrast, mammalian cloning is a new biotechnology that does not involve gene modification, but is nevertheless highly controversial. Cloning reproduces adult mammals by transplanting a nucleus from adult cells into an egg from which the nucleus has been removed and allowing the egg to develop in a surrogate manner. The resulting individuals are as similar to the adults from which the nuclei were taken as identical twins are to one another. Although this procedure has profound implications for human reproduction, it does not modify specific traits of an individual, but rather transfers a whole nucleus containing a complete set of genetic information.

The new technology that can affect future generations is genetic engineering, a technology based on the artificial manipulation and transfer of genetic material. This technology can move genes and the traits they dictate across natural boundaries -- from one type of plant to another, from one type of animal to another, and even from a plant to an animal or an animal to a plant. Cells modified by these techniques pass the new genes and traits on to their offspring. Genetic engineering can apply to any kind of living organism from microorganisms to humans.

Genetic engineering can be applied to

elite few, and the egregiously undemocratic nature of global trade agreements.

—GE Fish. 23 different species of fish have been genetically engineered. The Bush Administration is seeking approval to commercialize GE Salmon this year, posing unknown risk to the gene pool of an already threatened species.

—GE Trees and Trade in Forest Products. The ministers will discuss free trade in forest products in a panel titled: "Forest Resources Management: Sustainable Production, Harvesting, and Marketing." To compound the global ecological crisis and shrinking forest ecosystems left on the planet, the industry seeks commercialization of GE Trees within the decade. GE Trees will fundamentally alter the biosphere and native forests as we know them; we cannot afford to let this genie out of the bottle. An international campaign to stop GE trees will launch in Sacramento.

—GE food aid and USAID. USAID, a co-host of the Ministerial, has also played a role in contamination of indigenous crop varieties by dumping GE food "aid" on global south countries. Last year the nations of Zambia, Zimbabwe, & Malawi courageously demanded GE free food aid from USAID even though millions were facing starvation. Because the EU will not accept GE foods, they are being dumped on starving populations. This is not only overtly racist, it is part of a larger market access strategy of contamination via "aid" and free trade. The biotech industry knows that once entire gene pools are contaminated, there will be no way to regulate GMOs and a full monopoly on seed and genes will be achieved.

—Corporate Power. The Sacramento Ministerial is a perfect illustration of the unchecked power of transnational corporations. They are given access to decision makers while the public is locked out. They are given the right to patent indigenous wisdom and the building blocks of life itself. This entire exercise operates

on some fundamental assumptions—that corporations should put patents on life. That a cash crop economy is better than subsistence agriculture. And that food, water, wisdom, and biodiversity are commodities to be traded in the global marketplace. Its time to say "Enough!" and take back our wisdom, our food supply, our seeds, and assert the integrity of biodiversity and living ecosystems! Its time to build an economy that provides food for the hungry, health care for all, living wages, and lasting peace!

OK, so how do we do that?

The Sacramento convergence will run from June 20th-25th. People from many walks of life will gather in the streets of Sacramento to say yes to real food security. There will be debates, workshops, marches, nonviolent direct action, and more to confront and disrupt the agenda of the Bush Administration and the Agribusiness Industry on the road to the Cancun WTO Ministerial, the FTAA Ministerial in Miami, and beyond...

glossary.

Definitions of the two most damaging elements of agribusiness from the Union of Concerned Scientists

www.ucsusa.org

What is Biotechnology? Biotechnology is a broad term that applies to all practical uses of living organisms -- anything from microorganisms used in the fermentation of beer to the most sophisticated application of gene therapy. The term covers applications that are old and new, familiar and strange, sophisticated and simple.

Defined in this way, the term is almost too broad to be useful. One way of thinking about biotechnology is to consider two categories of activities: those that are traditional and familiar and those that are relatively new. Within each category can

the Facts.

about industrial agriculture in the U.S. are these:

1 Industrial agriculture hasn't fed the hungry in the richest nation on earth. The United States has the most advanced system of industrial agriculture on the planet. It subsidizes this system, through both explicit and implicit subsidy, to the tune of almost \$3 trillion a year (8). Yet the United States Department of Agriculture, the convener of the Sacramento Ministerial, has itself admitted that 36 million Americans are food insecure (9). This discrepancy suggests that the model of industrial agriculture hasn't served the most vulnerable citizens of the United States — 11% of the population. The chances of this model working elsewhere, where available subsidies are much lower, are slim.

2 Farmers lose sovereignty, seed and livelihood under industrial agriculture. The National Family Farm Coalition in the U.S. has found that the costs of genetic engineering, whether in terms of environmental, economic or agronomic risk, have been borne not by the corporate owners of industrial agriculture, but by farmers (10). Perhaps the most blatant example involves cases where genetically modified pollen has drifted onto the lands of farmers who have not purchased, and have no wish to use, genetically modified seed. In Canada, many farmers have been threatened with litigation by Monsanto for having the corporation's intellectual property on their land. These cases are not limited to the first world. Recently, Monsanto initiated proceedings against soy growers in Brazil, claiming royalties on seed that had been brought into the country illegally (11). This is symptomatic

of a wider trend in the privatization of seed, and in the subjection of farmers around the world to corporate rule.

3 The opportunities for economic growth through industrial agriculture are illusory. The economics of industrial agriculture don't add up. Beyond the vast subsidies required for their 'success' in the U.S., the yields of several key crops are systematically lower (12). In the U.S., the mix between labor and capital favors capital intensive agriculture. In the third world where labor is abundant and capital is scarce, industrial agriculture is precisely incorrect for the macroeconomic climate in the third world. This for three reasons.

First, small farms are more productive, more efficient, and contribute more to economic development than large farms. Small farmers can also make better stewards of natural resources, conserving biodiversity and safe-guarding the future sustainability of agricultural production (13). This runs counter to the myth of economies of scale claimed for large industrial agricultural farms. In other words, even without factoring in the externalities of, and subsidies to, industrial agriculture, small scale agroecological farming is better at providing food to communities in a robust and efficient way.

Second, the yields associated with biotechnology are invariably lower than those associated with agroecological farming. Recall that the primary motivation claimed by the U.S. is to increase the amount of food available to people in the third world. Yet studies show that farmers who adopt GM get lower yields. A 2001 Iowa State University cost analysis showed that Roundup Ready soybean fields in the U.S. are losing US\$8.87 per acre on average, while conventional fields are almost breaking even at an average loss of US\$0.02 per acre. Furthermore, University of Nebraska studies show that Roundup Ready soybeans yield 6% less than their closest conventional relatives, and 11% less than high-yielding varieties of soy (14).

A counter argument presented by the biotechnology industry is that while yields may be lower, total costs are lower too, since fewer pesticides and herbicides have to be used. Yet Roundup Ready soybeans have been shown to cost as much as 50% more than conventional soy production systems in the U.S., due to added costs of Roundup Ready seed and herbicides (15).

Third, even if industrial agriculture were to be adopted, it is not clear that a market exists for many of the products grown through these technologies. A recent U.S. consumer survey found that 92% of U.S. citizens want GM food to be labeled, and only a quarter of citizens think GM food is safe. Furthermore, there are strong preferences for family-farm produced food, and strong preferences against foreign food(16). These indicators do not suggest a robust market for industrial agricultural goods for those countries wishing to export them. Indeed, reports indicate that U.S. farmers are losing approximately US\$300 million annually for corn exports alone (17).

4 The extensive and expensive regulatory framework required for industrial agriculture has failed.

The regulatory burden that industrial agriculture places on government infrastructure is a high hidden cost. The U.S. has cut corners on this front, particularly with respect to biotechnology. The USDA Biotechnology Risk Assessment Program traditionally was allocated just 1% of the federal biotechnology research budget. In 2000, the Clinton administration directed USDA to support risk assessment research under its large Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems (IFAFS) Program. However, in 2001, the IFAFS request for proposals excludes submissions regarding risk assessment research (18).

For example, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved a GE corn

called Starlink™, which is classified as a plant pesticide and only allowed for use as animal feed. The corn was not deemed fit for human consumption because of the presence of a protein (Cry9C) that exhibits characteristics of known allergens. Despite these restrictions, the EPA had no policy in place to monitor the proper segregation of Starlink™ corn to keep it from entering the food supply. In 2000, Starlink™ corn was found in over a dozen corn-based food products, triggering a massive food recall in the U.S. The story has an interesting coda: In December 2002, traces of unapproved StarLink corn were found in a U.S. shipment bound for Tokyo's markets, much to the surprise of USDA officials, who believed that all remaining StarLink corn had been destroyed in 2001 (19). Clearly, EPA and other government agencies have done little to protect the public from potential human health risks posed by GE foods (20).

This example is one in which regulatory approval was required. There has only been one GM product that has been scrutinized by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) – the Flavr-Savr™ tomato. The tomato was approved despite repeated calls for further tests by the FDA's own scientists, who noted patterns of stomach lesions that called into question the safety of the tomato (21). Since then, the FDA has not conducted independent tests on any GM food.

5 **Industrial agriculture leads to irreversible contamination of the environment.** Contamination of the environment is another serious cause for concern. On November 17, USDA announced that there were two biocontamination incidents where genetically engineered corn developed by Prodigene, Inc. polluted conventional soybeans and neighboring corn fields. While ordering the quarantine and/or destruction of the polluted conventional

markets. Add to this the commercialization of pharmacrops, bioreactors & nutraceuticals. These are industrial crops or animals genetically engineered to produce vaccines, higher concentrations of particular vitamins, or other drugs for humans or livestock.

--**Water.** One topic of the opening plenary is titled: "The Challenge of Limited Water Resources and Policy Implications." The neoliberal answer to the global water crisis is privatization. The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) at the WTO is the mechanism through which corporations hope to gain access to full-scale buyouts and privatization of the world's remaining fresh water supply.

--**Pesticides and Farm worker health and safety.** An estimated 2.5 million people work on plantations and farms in the US and are exposed, even when the laws are followed to the letter, to toxic and carcinogenic chemicals. In California alone, 600,000 women and men labor as farmworkers, and 665 cases of pesticide poisoning are reported to the CA Department of pesticide regulation each year. The death rate for agricultural workers is more than 5 times higher than the average for all other occupations.

--**Living Wages and Justice for Farmworkers.** The Coalition of Imolakee Farmworkers in their Taco Bell Boycott campaign and Camapgin to End Slavery have brought international attention to the fact that some tomato pickers earn barely one cent for each pound of tomatoes picked and others have been forced to work under threat of violence in what has been classified as slavery by law enforcement agencies. One CIW hunger striker, Jose Garcia, 46, originally from Chihuahua in Mexico, said that he was paid 45 cents for a 32-pound (14.5kg) bucket of tomatoes. Jose Antonio

Martinez, 26, said that he often worked as many as 12 hours a day in the fields and often did seven-day weeks. Lucas Benitez claimed that Taco Bell was buying tomatoes produced in sweatshop conditions. He said that the average worker was lucky to get around \$7,000 a year and there was no right to organize a union without being fired, no overtime pay, and no sick leave or holidays. In the past five years there have been six federal prosecutions for slavery in the Florida agricultural industry. Agricultural contractors are charged under slavery laws dating back to the end of the civil war for forcing illegal immigrants to work in the fields under threat of violence. In 1999, a south Florida tomato grower kept 30 people in isolated swampland near Immokalee and forced them to work. Three workers who escaped were recaptured and beaten up. The contractor was jailed for three years.

--**Food Irradiation.** SureBeam Corporation ("Good food. Made better.") bought the opening ceremonies and ribbon cutting with Secretary Veneman for \$50,000. The irradiation of our food is not only a technology of questionable safety and desirability, but is another tool for the facilitation of transnational economic integration. By nuking the pests out of foodstuffs companies can ensure a longer shelf life, and easy passage through customs. (SPS?)

--**WTO Dispute over Biotech Regulations Challenging the European Union.** The Bush Administration has repeatedly made threats to the EU to challenge their moratorium on commercial biotech crops and the mandatory labeling of all GE foods in the Dispute Settlement Body of the WTO. The case will be brought sometime soon, and three unelected trade autocrats in Geneva will decide the fate of the biodiversity and diet of the European Continent. This brings us back to the fundamental removal of democratic control over the decisions that affect our lives and our planet from communities to the hands of an

message.

Talking Points Compiled by the
Institute for Social Ecology (ISE) on
the Sacramento Mobilization for
movement outreach.
www.socialecology.org/biotech

What's happening?

From June 23-25th 2003 the Ministers of Trade, Agriculture and Environment from 180 nations, including all member states of the World Trade Organization (WTO), will meet in Sacramento California at a summit hosted by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), USAID, and the US State Department. An industry "Expo on Agricultural Science and Technology" will run concurrently with the Ministerial. This summit, called by Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman, will attract thousands of media outlets from around the world, and potentially US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick, and will be an important stepping stone for enshrining the primacy of US interests at the September negotiations of the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) and other issues at the WTO ministerial in Cancun, Mexico.

Why is it important?

This summit gives social and environmental justice movements in North America a unique opportunity to converge and act in solidarity with people's movements around the world by calling for "WTO out of Agriculture!" Because of the fragility of agricultural negotiations in WTO, FTAA, and CAFTA, it is also an opportunity to exploit already existing cracks and fissures in the apparatus to weaken the larger free trade agenda. When the AoA deadlines passed on March 31 with no progress towards consensus, the AP reported that "An agreement on agriculture is seen by many as the key to the wider round of trade liberalization negotiations which also cover areas like cutting import duties on manufactured goods and opening up

the international market in services like banking and telecommunications."

Sacramento is a strategic moment to highlight some of the most pressing ecological issues of our time: the threat of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) to ecosystems and human health; the ever widening gap between the very rich and very poor; the increasing use of trade agreements to subvert democratic process; and the unchecked power of multinational corporations to lay claim to our food, our farms, our forests, and our future.

What is it all about?

--Export of the Industrial Agriculture Model. This event is about selling the neoliberal agribusiness model—of cash crops and export-oriented economies replacing sustainability and self-sufficiency, and pesticides, biotech, chemical fertilizers, and herbicides that harm farm workers, food safety, and the earth—to nations around the globe. The summit will proclaim that trade liberalization and agreements like WTO and FTAA are the panacea to solve poverty, war, and ecological catastrophe. To compound the problem, they trumpet biotechnology as the answer to chemical use, curing disease, and stopping hunger. We cannot let these false claims go uncontested!

What are some of the issues on the table in Sacramento that we can educate and mobilize around?

--Genetically Engineered (GE) food & agriculture. 60-70% of processed food in the US contains GE ingredients. US corporations would like to see this trend proliferate around the world; gain access to new mines of genetic resources and intellectual property in the rainforest communities of the South; and seek an open door for development and production of GE crops in new countries to sell in new

plants, USDA refused to divulge the identity of the biopharm contaminants or details of either contamination episode. USDA has refused repeated requests for a detailed account of the biocontamination (22).

This pattern has also been seen in the Third World. Through U.S. export of transgenic maize, Mexican maize has been contaminated. Mexico's sovereignty, expressed through its moratorium on GM planting material, sociocultural rights and the concerns of Mexican farmers have been brushed aside. GM contamination has offended and angered some farmers and indigenous peoples, and it raises grave concerns for their culture, livelihood, health, and environment. In the words of Aldo Gonzalez, a farmer from Sierra Juárez de Oaxaca:

"The contamination of our traditional maize undermines the fundamental autonomy of our indigenous and farming communities because we are not merely talking about our food supply; maize is a vital part of our cultural heritage. The statements made by some officials that contamination is not serious because it will not spread rapidly, or because it will 'increase our maize biodiversity,' are completely disrespectful and cynical" (23).

6 There are alternatives. The United Nations Environment Program has called modern agriculture "one of the major threats to the indigenous and local communities as well as to biodiversity, healthy ecosystems, and food security" (24). The proven alternatives to the disaster of industrial agriculture lies in a mix of policy and agricultural measures. The removal of the WTO and similar organizations from agricultural policy is a clear need, since the demands of export agriculture, and not the needs

of the hungry, currently drive international agricultural policy (25). There are a range of positive steps already being taken throughout the third world. Agroecological techniques have demonstrated vast success in ensuring food security where industrial agriculture has failed (26). Genuine and democratic land reform has the potential to spread these benefits far more widely than market mechanisms (27). In short, the Sacramento Ministerial is asking precisely the wrong questions if the concern is to feed the hungry, whether they be in the global South, or the North.

What can I do?

Join the mobilization against the ministerial in Sacramento, June 23-25. Information is available at www.foodfirst.org/sacramento

- Write to your local and national media, alerting them about the ministerial.
- Use the factsheets at www.foodfirst.org/sacramento/factsheets.php to educate media and the general public about industrial agriculture and the corporate attempts to control the international food system.
- get involved in the Sacramento Protest www.sacmobilization.org
- read, research, educate, rinse, repeat..
- eat at local restaurants and ditch fast food. www.mcspotlight.org/media/press/mcds/theguardian0704011.html
- find / start a Co-op or food buying club. www.coopdirectory.org
- Via Campesina, the international farmers' movement, has called for ministers to boycott the ministerial (28). Make ministers accountable to their people – even if they plan to attend, the demand can make the ministers less ready to give in to corporate pressure.

Boycott food produced through industrial agriculture, and support local family farming and urban agriculture. (29)

notes.

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